

men, who select a lucky day and hour ; at the head march men with wands to scare off prowling devils. Then in the midst of some of the objects mentioned above comes the "dead man's house," a sort of bamboo cage. The children and the nearest relations follow the bier. In passing the threshold of the door the coffin has been carried over their prostrate bodies. In the middle march a body of monks chanting a noisy but rhythmical requiem. Sham gold and silver leaf is scattered all along the road to soothe the CO-HON—the abandoned spirits. These are the souls of people who have died violent deaths, and have had no rites of sepulture. Their relations have not known of their fate, and have been unable or unwilling to perform the ceremonies which custom prescribes for the delivery of their souls. Therefore the CO-HON remain wanderers on the face of the earth, irritated with the living, and tormenting and oppressing them in every way. They trouble the sacrifices, upset the prognostics, and annihilate the efforts of domestic piety. The superstitious, therefore, are driven to all sorts of devices to appease and deceive these evil-minded demons. The CO-HON are attracted by the glitter of the false gold and silver leaf, halt to lay hands on it, and, before they discover the deception, have lost the opportunity of spoiling the funeral ceremony. There are others, however, who are more considerate, or more fearful of the wrath of these homeless spirits. They burn regular NHŪT-NHŪT-DONG-DONG—"numerous pieces of money." These are strips of paper with coins printed on them, regular postal orders on the lower world for the support of indigent devils. Naturally the funerals so protected are the safer for the deceased.

There are no public cemeteries in Annam. The grave is usually dug anywhere out in the middle of the fields belonging to the family. The rich usually have a special place for their own relations, and sometimes assign a patch for their poorer neighbours. Otherwise these must be buried by the roadside or in some part of the village common lands. At the grave the coffin is lowered in, a banneret of silk or paper giving in white and yellow characters deceased's name, age, dignities, position in family, and virtues, is thrown upon it, and then a small pile of the above-mentioned money paper. Each friend

throws in a handful of earth. The sextons fill it up and make a circular mound above. Offerings and prostrations are made before the completed grave, and then there is a general consumption of rice, wine, and betel-nut.

The period of mourning is very protracted. Nominally it lasts for three years for father or mother, but immemorial custom decrees that this means twenty-four months. For a grandparent or brother or sister it lasts one year, and so on in decreasing ratio. Men of rank cannot undertake public duties during this season, and ought not to be present at marriages or feasts of any kind. The son should eat no meat and drink no wine. The people are very proud of these regulations, but they do not keep them. At the end of the first year there are great sacrifices before the grave, at the end of the second the "dead man's house," the bamboo cage, is burnt, and with it the mourning garments. Desecration of the grave is punished with extreme severity.

The richer people erect stone monuments over their ancestors. The plain between Saigon and Cholon, the *Plaine des Tombeaux*, is full of these, of all sizes and in all states of decay, sometimes standing quite alone, sometimes with shrubs and then trees planted by them. There are inscriptions on most of them, usually cut into the stone and painted various colours. They bear the family and individual name and those of the deceased's titles and place of birth, the date of death, and the name of the person who set up the stone. Some of them are almost miniature temples. They are kept up by the head of the house, and there are regularly fixed days for worship before them.

This is in fact the only worship the Annamese have, but some of them carry it on with tolerable regularity. The first and the fifteenth of every month are the regular days set apart for worship at the ancestral shrine. At the same time there is always more or less sacrificing to the Co-HOX already spoken of. Nothing is deemed too great to soften their rancour. Besides the silver and gold paper and the "cash notes" above alluded to, there is a much more valuable paper currency. These are sheets of paper covered all over with designs and

written characters; at the top there is a bell with a tongue to it to attract the Co-HON. On either side are invocations to the Buddhas, the good genii, and the priests, preceded occasionally by the well-known formula NAM-MO A-DI-DA PHAT.

Below are representations of fine clothes, different domestic utensils, embroidered robes with PHŨC inscribed on them, mandarins' boots, strings of different kinds of money with THAI-BINH (eternal peace) on them, and a variety of other combinations—everything, in fact, that an indigent devil could require. The invocations at the top vary. In some of them they run, "Oh, all ye PHAT (Buddhas) who live for aye in the ten places. List, ye spirits, all-powerful." Or again, "Hearken, all ye saints, all-blessed, all-powerful, ye who are like unto fire pure and undefiled, grant, in your mercy, to forsaken spirits who have suffered from the three evils, entrance into the divine abode."

On the first and fifteenth of the month such papers of supplies, pecuniary and personal, are burnt not only at the ancestral altars and on the threshold of the houses, but upon special altars erected in lonely places to the Co-HON. While the papers are burning, the head of the family prostrates himself, and afterwards scatters broadcast on the roof of his cottage somewhat more substantial, but still scanty, offerings of rice and bananas. These are of course to prevent the Co-HON from coming inside, an occurrence which the most hospitable good-man would view with horror.

On the fifteenth day of the first, seventh, and tenth months, more particularly of the seventh, there are almost universal offerings to these troublesome Co-HON. They are called LE PHAT-LŨÔNG—distributions of food.

It is curious to watch the people come out of their houses just after dark. The father of the house calls out, "Spirit who hast a name, but no title; spirits who have titles but no human name; spirits of universal nature, crowd hither and eat my offering."

Then he turns to the four points of the compass, one after the other, commencing with the west, throws towards each of them a handful of salt and rice mixed, and burns a little of

the spirit-money, saying, "I call the laggard spirits; he who comes fastest will eat most. May ten become a hundred; may a hundred become a thousand; a thousand, ten thousand; ten thousand, a hundred thousand; a hundred thousand, a million; a million, a countless multitude." This is, it need hardly be explained, a desire to obtain the multiplication of his offering. The notion is of course borrowed from the Chinese with their regular sacrifices of DIEN. A development of this, found in all parts of the world among uncivilised nations, is the exorcism of evil spirits which are supposed to enter into people and cause illnesses. The method of driving these out in Annam differs little from the process described by dozens of writers on nations in other parts of the earth. The sorcerer is called THAI-PHAP, and he must on no account eat the flesh of buffaloes or dogs.

An analogous superstition is the ceremony of making offerings once every year to the former holders of the soil. No country farmer would think of letting the first three months of the year pass without making offerings of a general kind to the old aboriginal cultivators. Sometimes, however, this is not enough. He loses his dogs and pigs and chickens, his rice gets drowned with too much water or dies of drought; he falls sick himself and sees visions of capering, bloodthirsty savages.

Then he knows what is the matter, and goes straight off to a paper-goods manufacturer and orders a facsimile of his house to be built in paper. This is a most elaborate affair, reproducing not only a general model of the house, but of everything in it—furniture, people, dogs, cats, and pigs, and even the lizards in the thatch. All the human beings, however, are represented twice over, so that the ghost to whom this model is to be given up may not have an exact model of the owner, or of his wife or children. These houses are very dear, costing sometimes as much as £3, which is a large sum for a peasant farmer. If it is the commune that is making the offering, a model is made of the village shrine, the DINH.

On the determined day, offerings of the usual kind are made, and the wizard, the THAI-PHAP, falls into a trance, and is possessed by the deceased owner of the land. He blackens

his face on the bottom of a pot, eats ducks and chickens raw, and drinks wine by the bucketful. This is proof positive that the old savage owner is inside of him and is having a real good time. Then he is requested to make a formal cession of the land in question. If the farmer is a rich man the spirit does not yield for several days, if he is poor it is settled as soon as possible. A sum is fixed upon, a few hundred *ligatures* say, and this is promptly paid, in funeral money of course, which can be bought for a shilling or two. The possessed THAI-PHAP signs for the departed savage, planting a thumb dipped in ink at the bottom of the written conveyance. Then the medium is restored from his mesmerised state, the paper house is burnt, and with it the sum of money formally agreed upon. It is usually also stipulated that a pig shall be sacrificed every three years or oftener for the better comfort of the old land-owner. After this it is hard if the farmer does not enjoy peace o' nights.

The household ancestry, as we have said, are worshipped more or less all the year round; but the especial great season for every one, rich and poor, is the new year, the TÊT, the Annamese new year of course, which corresponds with the Chinese, and falls about the beginning of February. Then every one, down to the poorest, who at other times may not have the means or the leisure to pay proper attention to their forefathers, betakes himself to the last resting-place of his progenitors, and there is much burning of incense and funeral money, much scattering of rice and heaping up of fruit and flowers, during four days. The grass and other vegetable growths round about the tombs are carefully weeded away, and at the head of each a leaf of gold or silver is placed, and on this a stone to prevent it from being carried off by the wind. The belief is that, at a season such as the TÊT, the evil spirits are particularly active and spiteful on account of the general rejoicing and feasting which they see going on upon earth. They are therefore exceptionally likely to do harm to ordinary, easy-going souls, such as those of the rude forefathers of the hamlet. But their cupidity thwarts them. They clutch at the glittering leaf placed at the grave-head, and, while they are doing so, the respectable spirit down below has time to scurry off to a place of safety. The *Plaine des Tombeaux* at

Saigon presents an extraordinary appearance at this season of the year. Ordinarily it is as desolate, if not as big, as the similar place at Cairo; but during the four days of the TÊT both sides of the TAY-NINH road are crowded with pious descendants from all parts of the country, come to secure the tranquillity of their ancestry.—*France and Tongking*, by JAMES G. SCOTT, 1885.

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The scientific decoration of officier d'Académie (*les palmés académiques*) has been conferred by the French Government upon MADAME DE LA CROIX, whose husband M. J. ERRINGTON DE LA CROIX is a member of this Society and has done much useful scientific work in this part of the world.

The following extract is taken from the minutes of a meeting of the Société de la Géographie, Paris, held on the 17th July, 1885:—

“Le Président annonce ensuite la nomination de M<sup>me</sup>. ERRINGTON DE LA CROIX comme officier d'Académie. M<sup>me</sup>. DE LA CROIX a accompagné son mari en Malaisie où elle vient de faire un séjour de deux années dans la presqu'île de Malacca. Elle a su utiliser ses loisirs en racueillant pour le Muséum d'intéressantes collections de plantes, d'insectes et de papillons dont beaucoup de spécimens étaient entièrement nouveaux. Elle a en outre fourni un concours précieux à son mari dans les travaux scientifiques auxquels il se livrait de son côté. Bel exemple pour les femmes d'explorateurs ou de fonctionnaires qui habitent nos colonies! La vaillante exploratrice a bien mérité la distinction dont elle vient d'être l'objet.”

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A map shewing the course of the Triang river was to have accompanied Mr. O'BRIEN's paper on Jélébu published in No. 14 of this Journal. As, however, it was not received in time

for publication with the paper which it illustrates, it will be found at the end of the present number.

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Mr. E. W. BIRCH, of the Straits Settlements Civil Service, has been good enough to present to the Society an Album of Photographic views and portraits taken at the Cocos-Keeling Islands.



